

THE VOYAGE
OF THE 'PAX'

DOM BEDE CAMM, O.S.B.

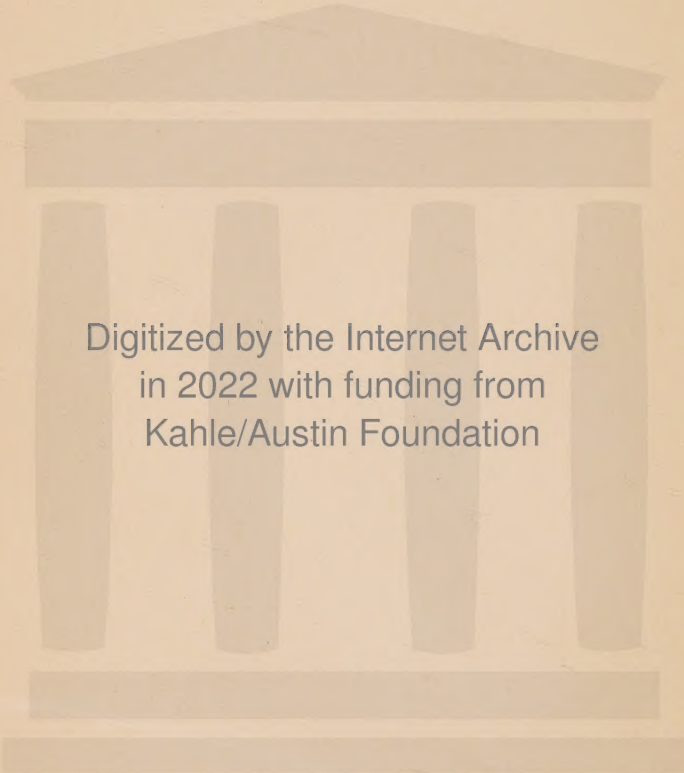
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The Pilot.

Rev. James Canning S. M.

THE VOYAGE
OF THE "PAX"



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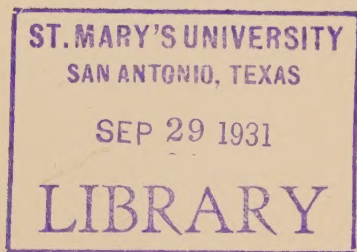
Joseph C. E. ...

THE VOYAGE OF THE "PAX"

An Allegory

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By
DOM BEDE CAMM
O.S.B.



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*To the Dear Memory
of
Lewis Joseph Arnold,
Who from Childhood gave his Heart
to God and St Benedict,
and having worn through life unstained
the White Robe of his Innocence
was in Death
Clothed with the Monastic Habit,
and fell asleep
in the Peace of Christ
March 8, 1904,
at the Age of 18 Years.
R.I.P.*

THE PREFACE

THIS little story needs perhaps a word of explanation. Really founded on a dream, it was first written to be read aloud to some lads who, under my care, were preparing themselves for the monastic life in our Abbey. They took great delight in it, and themselves suggested many additions and improvements to the original story. It was not meant for publication, and truly fulfilled its end by interesting those for whom it was written. But, after lying in a drawer for a good many years, it has been brought to light again, and is now, though with some trepidation, given to a wider circle of readers.

Though meant as a picture of the vocation of the few who, in these days, feel drawn to the Benedictine life of prayer and peace, it may possibly interest others who do not share that happiness. Perhaps indeed it may help to develop in some young heart the germ of a nascent vocation.

The Voyage of the "Pax"

I have dedicated it to the memory of one of those for whom it was written, who was never tired of hearing it read, and who is himself portrayed, though he was very far from suspecting it, in one of the leading characters of the story. He was the first of the little band of voyagers to reach the celestial country, the first to see the face of that Blessed One whom he loved so tenderly, and in whose habit he was clothed, to his great joy and consolation, but a few days before God called him from us.

D.B.C.

Erdington Abbey, Birmingham,

October 25, 1905.

THE VOYAGE OF THE "PAX"

An Allegory

I FELL asleep, and found myself transported to the shores of a vast ocean. The shore stretched before me, an interminable expanse bounded only by the distant horizon, a long stretch of yellow sand backed by a wall of inaccessible cliffs. The sea was calm and blue, and the sun shone brightly on the sparkling waters. Along the beach lay a flotilla of boats of all kinds and sizes, while further off loomed large in the bright haze the outlines of great ships—transports, as it seemed. Upon the shore was gathered an immense crowd of people of all ages and classes, all eager to embark. Some were chaffering with boatmen over the price of the passage, others had taken possession of the rowing boats and were making their way to one of the large ships that lay off the shore;

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others were seizing on boats of all kinds, including frail canoes, which seemed as if they must be swamped by the waves in the very moment of leaving the shore.

Among the crowd my eyes rested on a little group of boys. Two of them struck me particularly. They were evidently brothers, and the younger clung to his elder brother's hand as if half frightened by the uproar. The elder was a tall and graceful youth, with dark curly hair, and deep grey eyes which looked you in the face with the fearlessness and confidence that only innocence can give. He seemed about fifteen, and his brother, whom he was watching over with a tender care that seemed almost paternal and yet was wholly boyish, must have been about eight. The other two boys who formed the little group formed a contrast to the brothers. One, a tall lad of some fifteen years, was very fair, with a sunny face and laughing blue eyes which were most attractive. His companion pleased me less; he had a sullen expression on his face and

Symphorian

a rather shifty look in his eyes, and he was evidently out of humour. He was short and thin, and was probably the oldest member of the little party. His name, as I soon learned, was Symphorian.

The boys were bare-headed and clad in a simple white tunic reaching to the knees and leaving their limbs bare. The tunics were girt with a belt, and round their necks hung a golden cross.

I went nearer, to hear what they were saying.

"Why dost thou not heed me, Callixtus?" I heard Symphorian complaining to his fair-haired companion, "instead of running all over the shore looking for a boat that must have gone without us, or which has never come at all. Why not take yonder fellow's offer? He says he will row us out to that fine galley yonder, and if size and speed count for anything we shall reach our journey's end far quicker and more safely than by thine old-fashioned bark."

"Poor old Symphorian!" was the reply. "I am so sorry to try thy patience thus ;

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but thou knowest that we were told to look for the boat with *Pax* upon the prow, and the guide who would bring us safely home. Agathos and Theodore here are going by the same boat, and thou wouldst not like to leave them in the lurch?"

"Come," interrupted Agathos, the elder brother, whom we have described, "I think our search is at an end. Look, Symphorian, look, Theodore! look at that large galley yonder with the black banner on which the device we seek is embroidered in golden letters, *Pax*, and see yon stranger standing by the ship with the long flowing robes and the hood upon his head. Surely this is the guide sent us by the Prince! Methinks he has a venerable face and kindly air, and we should do well to join ourselves to him; and I see there are other lads already in his company." And Agathos led the way to a little group standing by the water-side.

"Welcome, my children," said the voice of the stranger. "Will ye embark with me in the good ship *Pax*? She is a boat that

Her Builder and Owner

hath made the voyage many thousands of times before, and never has she lost a passenger—save indeed that they left her by their own will—since the day that she was built long years ago.”

“Father,” said Agathos, “we long to arrive at the Golden City, where our parents wait for us to bring us into the presence of the King. And they told us that we should voyage most securely in a boat that bore the same device as thine. I pray thee, who is the builder and owner of this vessel?”

“It was built, my son, long years ago, by one named Benedict,” was the reply.

“That means Blessed, does it not?” interposed Callixtus.

“Yes, verily, and Blessed was he both in name and grace. This ship hath he built to bring across this stormy sea those who are willing to trust themselves to it, and to obey the conditions which he hath laid down.”

“And what are they?” inquired Agathos, while little Theodore looked up trustfully

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into the kind face of the stranger. "And how much doth the passage cost, I pray?"

"These are the conditions, my son. The passage is free to all, and there is no price asked. But ye must know that this ship is one of the pilot vessels that lead the flotilla of the Prince's ships. And since it must be the leader, it can bear no idle passengers; all that embark therein must be mariners, willing to take their turn at the oar, and ready to obey in all things the commands of the captain. And since this ship must go faster than the rest, it must be weighted down by no useless merchandise or baggage. Empty-handed ye must embark, nor must ye pick up anything upon the way. And as the pilot ship it must be the model to the Prince's fleet, and therefore must the oarsmen be clean and pure, without and within, so that on board this ship there can be no unseemly mirth or ribald songs, but the oarsmen cheer their labour by singing the sweet songs of the Golden City, and they must in all things

Callixtus and His Baubles

follow the instructions laid down for their guidance by the owner of the ship."

"What," cried Callixtus ruefully, "may I not take these pretty stones with me?" and he showed a collection of sparkling stones and curious shells which he had been picking up on the beach. "And will there be no fun for us at all upon your boat?"

"My son," replied the stranger gravely, though there was a kindly smile in his eyes, as he looked at the eager flushed face of the boy, "my dear son, thou must make thy choice. If thou wishest to go with me, thou must leave thy baubles behind. But think not that there will be no gaiety on board; happy you will be, and gay and merry, as becometh the favoured children of so great a prince; only the amusements, such as those indulge in who live but for pleasure, will not be for you. And indeed, my child, these pleasures have been the means by which too many have come to miserable shipwreck."

"Those who sail with me," the stranger

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continued, looking round at the little group, "must have but the one aim, to get as quickly as possible to the Golden City, there to see their King. They must not desire to linger by the way, or to wander first to divers other ports, and then think at the end to find their way home at last. Indeed, my children, such people do greatly deceive themselves. One day is all we have for our voyage, and it is none too long."

"But," put in one of his hearers, a tall young man with a slightly effeminate look, whom I had not noticed before, "meanest thou that we may not voyage by the Isle of Plenty, and call at the city of *Voluptas* by the way? The sailors of yonder ship told me that they were going that way, and that they would reach the Golden City in plenty of time. Besides, I had rather pay my passage with these golden coins, than have to work like a galley-slave at the oar."

"Well, my son," was the reply, "thou art free to embark on yonder ship if thou wilt. Only I warn thee that thou wouldst be

The “Præcepta Dei”

far safer with me; and oft has it happened that those who landed on the Isle of Plenty tarried so long that they could not reach the Golden City before the night. Others have so weighted down their ship with merchandise that they have been unable to weather the storms that always beat around the point which we must double before we reach the haven where we would be. Still I would not persuade thee to embark on the *Pax* against thy will. But if thou comest not with me, take rather a passage on the *Præcepta Dei*, one of the King's ships, in which thou wilt reach home in safety, though not so swiftly or with such honour as in a pilot boat. Yet even there thou wilt have to work and to obey the captain; those who would embark as for a pleasure-trip will never reach the haven.”

Eutyches hesitated for a while, and then I saw him leave the group, and a little later I noticed him bargaining for a berth in a large, brightly-coloured pleasure-boat, which already seemed too crowded

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with gay young men and women to be a safe refuge on a stormy sea.

Meanwhile other lads had gathered round the stranger, and his crew was soon complete. A pretty sight it was to see them set sail, singing lustily a sacred canticle the while—methought the words ran *In exitu Israel de Egypto*. The large black sails were filled with a seaward breeze, and the boys were divided into two companies, one of which laboured at the oars, while the others cheered them with their songs, till their turn came to row. And the songs were all about the Golden City and the King to whose presence they were longing to be admitted. The stranger sat at the helm and guided the good ship *Pax* skilfully through the rocks which reared their threatening heads on every side. I noticed that he consulted ever and again his chart, which was inscribed *Regula Sancti Pátris Benedicti*, and was in truth a chart drawn up by the builder of the ship long years ago by which men might steer a safe course.

I noticed also that the boys rowed with

She puts to Sea

oars on which was inscribed in golden letters the device *Laborare est orare*. At first methought they had difficulty in managing these oars, though some found them easier than others, and thus their rowing was uneven, and the ship did not keep a straight course. Callixtus rowed vigorously and powerfully, but without much science; indeed, he was less proficient in some respects than even little Theodore. Agathos, however, who led the little band, rowed well and bravely, and his oar seemed to glide easily through the water with a pleasant rhythm and evenness which gave time to the whole crew. And the stranger meanwhile would cheer them with word and smile, and the hymns that went up into the clear heaven put strength and courage into the young arms that otherwise might have flagged with the unaccustomed labour.

I turned to see how the other boats were doing. Following close on the *Pax* came a flotilla of boats not unlike her in appearance, though bearing different flags. On

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one I saw a strange device, two arms crossed bearing each wound prints in the hands: it was the banner of the *Seraph*. Another bore the device *A.M.D.G.*, another *Jesu Christi Passio*, and yet a fourth I noticed called *The Hound of God*. These were gallant boats, and others were there like to them, and all were manned by crews of young oarsmen full of zeal and fervour. But methought that on the *Pax* the hymns were more incessant, and the oars moving more swiftly and more evenly than on all the rest beside.

Again I saw the mighty hull of the *Præcepta Dei*, which trusted not to oarsmen, but to its sails alone, and so depended on the wind. It lagged behind the others I have mentioned, nor did it follow the same straight course; perchance its great size prevented it from going through the shallow channels between the rocks which the *Pax* threaded so easily and securely.

Behind and around, scattered over the sea as far as the eye could reach, were countless other barks. Though all professed

Some other Vessels

to have the same destiny, I was surprised to mark that many were taking very different courses, and some indeed seemed drifting at the mercy of the wind without compass or even rudder, while the passengers amused themselves as if the boat must bring them safely home of its own accord.

Not so the *Pax*; very vigilant was the steersman, and very promptly did the young oarsmen obey his directions. All was order and discipline on board that happy boat, yet in spite of their hard work the faces of the rowers were full of brightness and joy. Ever as Agathos bent his strong back to the oars, I seemed to hear him whisper, "One step nearer home." And when little Theodore was tired of rowing, I marvelled to see how gently the stranger took him in his arms and told him stories of the Golden City, which comforted him and delighted him so greatly that presently he was all eager to begin again. I noticed too that the gay and bright Callixtus was growing more serious at his task, and that the oars now dipped together evenly and regularly, and

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his stroke was almost as long and as steady as that of Agathos himself.

Symphorian, however, looked less happy. He seemed to find the work hard and unattractive, and even the sweet songs of his companions began to weary him. I heard him often asking the stranger for a rest, and when he was granted it he seemed unwilling to return to the oar. And though he was strong and vigorous, his rowing was uneven and ragged, and I feared he would not persevere in the task he had undertaken.

And now a cloud seemed to come over my vision, and I lost sight for a time of the blue sea with its sparkling waters and gallant little fleet.

When the mist passed away, I noted with some alarm that great black clouds were gathering on the horizon. Methought the stranger at the helm of the *Pax* noted them also, but his young crew took no heed of them, nor did those of the other boats which were now scattered far and wide over the sea. And as I gazed a large

The “Gloria Mundi”

boat drew close to the side of the *Pax*; it was the gay pleasure-boat whereon I had seen Eutyches embark. The purple sails filled out with the rising wind were bearing her swiftly onward. On her prow I saw her name inscribed in golden letters, *Gloria Mundi*. The large deck was crowded with the passengers, some reclining on easy chairs, others dancing to the strains of a viol, others again drinking out of gold or silver goblets. Very fair was the ship, and fair and bright were the faces of her passengers; all seemed full of gaiety and enjoyment, and I noticed that Eutyches seemed much engrossed in the conversation of the beautiful girl who sat by his side. Presently, however, he looked up and saw the *Pax* close beside his own vessel.

“What ho, Callixtus; what ho, Symphorian!” he called out merrily. “Are ye not tired of your dull old craft and your ceaseless toil? See what a fine time we are having on board this gallant boat? Plenty of amusement of all kinds, and not a stroke of work?”

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Both boys looked up at the call, and methought their eyes rested with some natural pleasure on the bright picture before them.

"Come and join us," continued Eutyches; "don't stay moping there. Ye will see nothing of life on that dull ship with the black sails. Why, it gives me the shivers even to look at it. Come, and we will have a merry time at the fair city of *Voluptas*, whither we are bound."

Symphorian hesitated; he glanced at the stranger. "Sir," he said at last, "I am very tired of this work, and perchance the *Gloria Mundi* would suit me better."

"My child, remember what I told thee ere thou didst embark with me."

"I know, but I did not understand it properly then. Now would I fain go with Eutyches."

"Go, then, my son, I have no power to keep thee. Only remember that the city of *Voluptas* does not lie on the way to the Golden City, and that few of those who embark on yonder gay boat ever reach their haven."

Symphorian's Departure

"Oh, but some do, surely! And I will be one of them. Have no fear for me, good father, I was not made for the labours of a pilot boat. Farewell, Agathos, farewell, little Theodore! I know it is useless to ask you to come with me; but thou, my Callixtus, thou wilt surely come?"

"Nay, I know not," replied the boy, his fair brow knit with the keen inward struggle that was raging in his mind. "I know not; fair indeed is thy ship, and much do I love pastime and music, and yet, I fear, thy craft is not so safe."

"Be not a coward!" went on Symphorian, while the scornful laughter of Eutyches floated on the air.

"Come, bright boy," cried a lady with golden locks, looking over the side of the *Gloria Mundi*; "come with me and thou shalt have thy full of pastime and music. Come, and I will teach thee many a pretty dance"; and she smiled invitingly at the wavering boy.

But Callixtus turned to the stranger. "Father," he said, "what shall I do?"

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"My child," he replied gravely, "look at what our Father Benedict hath written. And he drew out a roll from his breast, and began to read:

"Deny thyself in order to follow CHRIST. Chastise thy body; seek not after pleasures; make thyself a stranger to this world and its works."

"This, my son, is the safe way that leads surely to the Golden City. In yonder bark thou wouldst find pleasures indeed, but pleasures that would endanger thy safety, and bring thee into terrible peril."

Callixtus looked in the old man's face, his bright eyes were dimmed with a tear, for the sacrifice cost him much; but he said bravely and resolutely: "Father, I wish to serve the Prince, and I will take thy counsel."

Meanwhile a little boat had left the *Gloria Mundi* to fetch Symphorian. Gladly he clambered into her, and without waiting even to say good-bye to his old companions, pushed off quickly for the pleasure ship. Agathos looked very sad, and little Theo-

The Golden Bottle

dore began to cry bitterly. All were so busy trying to comfort him that they did not notice that the lady with the golden locks who had addressed Callixtus was making signals to him once more.

Kissing her hand to him, "Farewell, fair youth," she cried; "fair thou art, but foolish; still will I give thee a flask of sweet wine that thou mayest drink to our good voyage"; and so saying she deftly tossed over into the boy's lap a golden bottle, which he took blushing, and hid within his bosom. And as he did so, methought I heard a deep sigh fall from the stranger at the helm.

And now the *Gloria Mundi* was already far on her way, keeping a different course to that followed by the *Pax*. And whereas the breeze, which had now grown into a strong wind, drove the pleasure-ship quickly along its course, the *Pax*, which was turned in another direction, had to battle against its force, and all sails being furled, the young crew had to work hard at their oars.

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Methought Callixtus cast more than one longing glance after the gaily painted craft as he toiled at the oar till the sweat stood in great beads on his brow. At last his turn came to rest awhile.

"Why should I not at least refresh me after my labour by drinking of the wine she gave me?" I heard him say to himself; and drawing the flask furtively from his bosom, he examined it carefully.

Beautiful indeed it was, of pure gold, set with precious stones. Around it wound a golden snake with eyes of emeralds, and the reptile's mouth formed the orifice of the flask. On it was engraved the device, *Concupiscentia carnis.* *Desire of the flesh.*

The boy started when he saw the serpent, which looked indeed most life-like. Although so beautiful, the flask had an evil look, and I saw that he hesitated before opening it. He looked at the stranger as though once more about to ask his advice, but quickly turned away and gazed, as if fascinated, at the flask with its flashing gems.

The Golden Bottle

"At least I will open it and smell it," he murmured, unscrewing the stopper of the flask the while. A sweet but sickly perfume rose from the opened bottle. Callixtus turned pale, but eagerly smelled at it again and again. Had he been rowing, he could not have yielded himself up so entirely to his uncanny treasure, but he was resting in the prow, and no one looked his way. Slowly, as if fascinated by the serpent's jewelled eyes, he raised the flask to his lips, and quaffed a few drops.

"Ah, how sweet, how sweet!" he exclaimed, and eagerly drank again. His eyes shone wildly, and his cheek was flushed with excitement or with the potent draught. And now a gentle voice fell on his ear, and hastily closing the flask, he thrust it in his bosom, and turned to see Agathos standing by his side.

"Callixtus," he said, "it is thy turn to row."

"What! wilt give me no rest?" the lad cried, querulously. "Work from morning to

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night! Ah, would I were with Symphorian!"

"Callixtus," said Agathos reproachfully, "what has come to thee? But I know well thou dost not mean it. And indeed, if thou wilt, I will gladly take thy turn. Only wilt thou then take little Theodore? for he is tired, and I had promised him that I would sing him to sleep."

"No, go away and leave me in peace. Why should I be troubled with the child?"

Agathos was amazed. Was this the bright cheerful Callixtus, who always had a kind word and a smile for every one? He could hardly believe his ears.

"Methinks thou art not well," he said. "Art thou suffering, my Callixtus? Shall I send our kind guide to assist thee?"

"No, go away; leave me in peace"; and the boy, blushing hotly, turned his back on his questioner. Agathos sighed, but went away quietly, and I noticed that his lips moved softly as if he were speaking to an unseen friend.

The Fall of Callixtus

No sooner had he left him than Callixtus, after a hasty look round to see that he was unobserved, took out once more the golden flask, and feverishly drank a long draught. Alas! it seemed not to refresh him, although he drank so eagerly. On the contrary, his eyes seemed wilder and his face more flushed than before. He was breathing heavily, too, and now and again he clutched his side as if in deadly pain. And now a bell rang sweetly out, and the voice of the stranger was heard calling all to the morning meal. The oars were shipped, and the anchor let down, for this was the hour of rest. The young crew soon gathered together on the upper deck, and only Callixtus was missing. "Callixtus! Callixtus!" was the call of many voices. And presently they saw him coming. But how strangely he walked, or rather staggered along the deck! The growing wind had indeed begun to ruffle the sea, but the motion of the vessel was not sufficient to account for the way the poor lad lurched from side to side. His face was deadly pale and his eyes wild-

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er than before. He had evidently been drinking deeply of the fatal flask. Even as he came near the group assembled on the deck, his feet slipped from under him, and he fell headlong with a piteous groan, and then lay still. The boys were about to rush to his side, but the stranger interposed. "Leave him to me, my children ; tarry ye quietly where ye are."

"Oh ! he is dead, he is dead !" wailed little Theodore, as he saw the stranger bending over the prostrate form of his favourite playfellow. But the others bade him hush, and watched with intense anxiety as the stranger chafed the cold hands and loosened the tunic of the poor boy. As he did so the flask escaped from his bosom, and fell with a thud upon the deck. The stranger picked it up. "Alas ! it is as I feared ; he has been drinking poison," he cried. "But he is not really dead ; his heart still beats." And he redoubled his efforts to revive the boy.

Presently Callixtus opened his eyes ; and when he saw the stranger's grave face

A Healing Medicine

bent over his, the blood rushed hotly to his cheeks. "Father," he murmured, "Father, I have sinned." "Yes, my child, I know, I know, but it is not too late; wilt thou take this antidote prepared by our great Prince for cases such as thine? It is bitter, but it is a sovereign cure." "Father, give it me." The stranger took from his breast a flask labelled *Pœnitentia*. He poured some of the blood-red liquid which it contained down the boy's throat. Callixtus shuddered violently; the draught was very bitter. Yet its effect was instantaneous. He rose to his feet, the glow of health in his cheeks, his blue eyes once more bright with happiness and life. "There remains one more thing to be done, my child," said the stranger. Callixtus looked at him, and then his eyes fell to the ground. He saw the fatal flask lying on the deck. Blushing and trembling he took it up, and with his strong young arm flung it far away into the sea.

"It is well, Callixtus. Thou didst not know what thou wert doing, when thou drankst first of that foul drug. And yet

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something told thee not to touch it, and when thou hadst tasted it the craving grew for more, and yet, although so sweet, it left a fiery and a bitter taste. My child, hadst thou drained it to the dregs, thy life must have paid the penalty. Never couldst thou have seen the Golden City or the Prince's face."

"O my Father! never, never again will I hide aught from thee."

"It is well, son, and now let this be a secret ever between me and thee. Thy companions know nothing of the cause of thy faintness; let them never know. Happy are they who have never tasted, never even dreamed, of the poisoned cup."

As he said this, I noted that the boys upon the deck had seen and heard nothing of what passed between the stranger and Callixtus. Only now they saw him coming to them, bright and fair, the same dear playfellow as of old; and yet there was a change. Something of the boy's innocent gaiety had fled, and methought there was a trace of sadness even in the smile where-

The Morning Meal

with he greeted their rapturous welcome, and assured them that he was as well as ever. And now had the hour come for the morning meal.

And first the stranger bade the lads cleanse well their hands and their bare feet, for the Food whereof they were to partake was sacred, and might be eaten only by the clean.

I saw then a table spread upon the deck, though methought it had rather the form of an altar of sacrifice. A snowy cloth covered it, and thereon were laid white bread, and wine in golden vessels. The stranger stood before the table, and the children knelt around. The grace before the meal was long and full of wondrous beauty. And as the stranger raised his hands in blessing, the dark clouds which were gathering o'erhead parted, and from the cleft there streamed forth rays of dazzling light, brighter, it seemed to me, than ever sun that shone; and as the rays beat down upon the table, my eyes could scarce see clearly for the glory, but me-

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thought I discerned hovering over the bread and wine a Dove of snowy whiteness; but when I looked again it was gone. Only I saw the stranger and his little flock kneeling with bowed heads, as though in awe and worship, and there smote upon my ear strains of unearthly music, passing sweet to hear, as though an unseen choir were gathered in the heavens above. And presently the stranger arose, and holding in his hand the golden dish, he laid upon the tongue of each a round white loaf, light as a snowflake, and methought that upon each loaf I saw imprinted the form of a lamb. But when he came unto Callixtus, the boy shrank back, striking his breast and crying, *Domine, non sum dignus*. But the stranger smilingly bade him have no fear, for that he needed this food more than all the rest. And then they each drank of the golden chalice, and I saw with wonder that from this slight meal each rose refreshed, with strength renewed like unto young eagles, so that I saw that this could be no common food.

A Hymn of Praise

And gathering round the stranger, they sang a hymn of praise unto the great King who had filled them with good things, for that His mercy endureth for ever.

And it seemed to me that I heard their hymn of thanksgiving echoed from the other boats of the flotilla, proving that on them, too, the same mystic meal had been partaken of, and the same strength vouchsafed to the mariners.

And now the stranger bade his children sit round about him while he gave them further directions for the voyage. A fair sight it was to see: the boys, with their eager young faces, still lit up with traces of that celestial light, fixed on the venerable form of their guide, as they sat round him on the deck, or leaned against the bulwarks of the vessel.

“My sons, my dear sons,” he began, “we have finished safely and happily one part of our voyage. Yonder rock is, as it were, a mile-stone on our way, telling us that we have now made a quarter of our journey. But far the hardest part remains;

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up till now all has been plain sailing, but the storm is gathering overhead, and we are about to venture away from the sheltering shore forth into the pathless deep. Very fierce are the waves of this ocean, very strong the currents, and woe to the hapless mariner who falls overboard! for in this sea dwell fierce sea-monsters, ever seeking whom they may devour. Yet are ye safe as long as ye obey my voice, and work hard at the oar as I have told you. Nevertheless the labour is great, and though the reward offered by the Prince is far, far greater, yet some there may be among you too faint-hearted for the work. If there be such, there yet is time to seek another vessel. The King's great transport, the *Præcepta Dei*, lies but a few fathoms off. In her, too, ye will be safe, and your labours will be far less arduous. For the crew of this pilot-boat we need brave souls, who do not shrink from toil, and who look but to the glorious crown that awaits them in the Golden City. For though all who cleave to the *Præcepta Dei* will come to

The Captain's Speech

port, only to you, and those like you, who man the Prince's pilot-boats, will it be granted to sit with Him at His side and be His chosen friends and dear attendants. Choose then to-day, while yet there is time. Will ye take the harder lot to gain the richer prize, or be content if ye can but arrive in safety at the port?"

He paused, and looked round upon the bright young faces with a questioning smile.

"Father," said Agathos, speaking modestly but firmly; "Father, for my part I long but to do the Prince's will. Since he has chosen me for this post of honour, gladly and joyously will I endure the toil. Fain would I be numbered among the sons of that most Blessed One who first built and manned this gallant ship."

Little Theodore, clasping his brother's hand, cried: "And I will be with Agathos."

Gladly and unhesitatingly came the same answer from them all, nay, from all but two. Two there were that sat with downcast eyes in shamefaced manner, unwilling, as it seemed, to speak.

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"Theophilus," said the stranger to one of them, "what is in thy heart?"

"Father," said the boy, hanging down his head, "I am not strong, and methinks life on board the *Pax* is too hard for me. If thou permittest, I will seek the *Præcepta Dei*, and take my passage on her."

"It is well, my son; and thou, Callixtus?" the stranger continued (for it was he who still had not answered), as he went and leaned over him kindly.

The boy looked up, his cheeks afire, and his eyes glistening. "Father," he whispered, "I am not worthy."

"Nay, my dear son, hath not the Blessed One said, 'Never despair of the mercy of God.'"

"But I am not worthy to be with these whom the Prince has called to lead their brethren. How can I set an example to others, who am more vile than the lowest, more miserable than the outcast?"

"Callixtus, thou has learnt the lesson which thy fall was meant to teach thee. Far more fit now that thou has learnt to

Partings

tread the seventh degree of the ladder of humility, that when a gay and thoughtless child thou didst first set foot upon this bark. Thou wouldst fain serve thy Prince, and be near Him for ever?"

"Father, it is my one desire."

"Then fear not, for He hath chosen thee."

Callixtus looked up, full of a joyous confidence which lit up his whole face and beamed from his eyes. *Ecce adsum*, he murmured; *fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*.

And now a signal was made to the King's transport, and a boat soon put off to fetch Theophilus. Sorely did his companions grieve to part with him, for he was a gentle lad beloved by all. But sadly he shook his head when they pressed him to stay with them. "Indeed, I dare not. It is too high a lot for me." And so he was taken from their sight.

And now the stranger called his young crew around him once more, and told them that now they had made an irrevocable choice; and that they must know that henceforth they could not leave the Prince's

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ship, but must abide in her until they came to shore. Henceforth they must obey him with implicit trust and ready hearts; henceforth they were the chosen mariners of that great Admiral Benedict, by whose directions they were to make their course. And each lad, one by one, beginning with Agathos, and ending with little Theodore, came forward and knelt before the stranger, henceforth to be their captain, and with hands folded between his own promised solemnly and publicly obedience to his commands, and to the rules laid down of old by Benedict. And in token of the solemn contract made, the captain gave to each a tunic sable as his own, and round their waists he bound a cord with three great knots, and round their necks he hung a medal bearing on the one side the figure of the Blessed One, and on the other the arms of the Great Prince, whose special servants they had now become. For Benedict the Blessed was himself a mighty Admiral of the Prince's fleet, and none could carry out his will unless

Symphorian Again

the Prince had first chosen him for His own.

And now my gaze wandered off to the *Gloria Mundi*, which was making her way northward towards the port of *Voluptas*. Her deck was crowded with gay passengers who were laughing, talking loudly, drinking and dancing, much as I had seen them doing before. It was some time before I could distinguish Eutyches. He was in the midst of a knot of young men, and close beside them was Symphorian. But poor Symphorian looked far from happy. His face was flushed, and in his eyes were the starting tears, although he was evidently doing his best to restrain them. Eutyches and his dissolute companions were mocking the poor boy. "Look at the hypocrite," one was sneering, "with his cross round his neck, as if he were so far better than the rest of us." "Bah! I hate such canting whining sneaks!" cried another. "Throw that accursed cross overboard," roared a third, "or we'll teach you better manners." Eutyches pretended to

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be more sympathetic. "My dear Symphorian," he said, "you must see what bad taste it is to obtrude the Prince's crest on a ship which does not belong to him; do be like other people, and at any rate hide it in your bosom, as some do, who from a superstitious feeling of loyalty do not like to get rid of it altogether." But in spite of all the taunts of his companions, Symphorian would take no heed. Breaking away from the band of his tormentors, he rushed to the bows of the ship, where he threw himself down, his hand still grasping the cross as if to guard it from attack. The scornful laughter of Eutyches and his companions followed him to his retreat. The poor boy's breast heaved with suppressed sobs, and I felt how much happier he would have been had he chosen to remain on the *Pax*. After some minutes he felt a hand on his shoulder and looked up to see Eutyches standing by his side. He tried to turn away. "Nay, flout me not, my little cross-bearer," began that youth, "for I am not come to torment thee. In sober truth, my

Symphorian and Eutyches

head is splitting; the wine is so strong that I can hardly keep upright. I only want a little quiet. Dost see how black the heavens have become? and the wind has grown to a gale. Methinks a storm is rising, and we are yet far from the port."

"I would we were making direct for the Golden City," said Symphorian. "My mind misgives me as to this port of *Voluptas*; they say that there are hidden rocks and dangerous whirlpools in the gulf that leads to it."

"Nonsense, those are the old wives' fables they taught thee on the *Pax*! It is a fine place, the most beautiful city in the world, and there are bazaars full of rich merchandise, and gold and jewels, and lovely gardens full of fruit and flowers which a man may pluck as he will, and music and dancing all day long."

"Yes, but the king of the city is a cruel tyrant, and they say that he seizes on strangers and sells them as slaves, and they have to work in the mines in misery and chains."

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"But we do not intend to stop there; we shall only call, and visit the sights, and make some purchases, while the sailors unload the cargo; and then we shall be off again, before the king has even heard of our coming. But, Symphorian," he added in a lower tone, "I would thou wert not so foolish and so stubborn about the Prince's sign. 'Twill not be safe, they say, to wear it at *Voluptas*, for the king of that country is our Prince's mortal foe, and even here it is not well looked on. Can you not hide it away—as I do," he added, sinking his voice to a whisper. "I would not they knew it; but I have not cast mine altogether aside, and still wear it concealed."

"Eutyches, I promised. No; I will never break my word!"

"Well, thou art a fool for thy pains—but what is that?" he cried in alarm as the *Gloria Mundi* shivered from end to end, while a grating, tearing sound, terrible to hear, checked suddenly the laughter and the songs, and made every cheek turn pale. Then a cry arose, such a horrible despair-

Wreck of the "Gloria Mundi"

ing cry, a shriek of agony shrill and terrible, never to be forgotten. "We are on the rocks! we are on the rocks!" Who can describe the awful scene of confusion that ensued? The passengers rushed about the deck, shrieking, and tearing their hair. They rushed to the side of the ship, but could see nothing; evidently the rocks were submerged. Meanwhile the ship continued to quiver and grate against the rocks, and the same terrible, tearing sound went on. The waves were very high, and though it was about noonday, a thick fog enveloped the doomed ship and added to the misery and terror of its crew. Gradually the vessel began to subside, sinking down upon the larboard side, so that the deck was at almost right angles with the water. It was thus impossible to lower the boats, and I saw Symphorian and Eutyches, with other passengers, clinging to the bulwarks, on the upper side of the deck. Eutyches was deadly pale, and was evidently in an agony of fear. "Alas!" I heard him cry, "I have lost the Prince's sign! Now I shall

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never reach the Golden City. Give me thine, Symphorian !"

"Nay, but thou saidst just now it was on thy breast."

"Ah, but I have lost it ! Help ! help !" he shrieked desperately, and soon his cries were drowned in the roar of a great wave that came bursting over the sinking ship. Terrible were the scenes that followed. The unhappy passengers, frenzied by terror, fought and cursed and blasphemed, struggling each to reach some coigne of vantage where they might escape the violence of the waves. Many fell shrieking from the bulwarks into the foaming water, and were lost ; others climbed up into the rigging, and shouted for the help that never came.

In a terribly short time, as it seemed to me, the ill-fated vessel gave a lurch, and, turning over, sank beneath the waves. The crew and passengers were sucked down into the abyss. At this awful moment I heard a call, and saw a large vessel drawing rapidly near. The fog was lifting, and I could see

Sic Transit !

that she was the *Præcepta Dei*. Some of the drowning mariners saw her, too, and hailed her frantically. She answered promptly, and I saw several boats pushing off from her sides. They were able, however, to pick up but few of the shipwrecked passengers, who for the most part perished miserably in the seething waters before the boats could reach them. Symphorian and Eutyches, with one or two more, I saw clinging to a spar which had fallen from the rigging, and I noticed with awe that it bore the form of a cross, the Prince's sign. Eutyches seemed to be horribly frightened, and he clutched the spar with frantic grasp. Just then a wave dashed over them, and the next moment I saw the figure of the girl whom I had seen with Eutyches on the deck. She was wildly shrieking, and, seeing the youth close to her, she flung her arms around him, crying, "Save me! save me!" Eutyches tried in vain to cast her off. Her drowning clasp tightened around him, until, with a horrible cry, he was forced to let go of the spar. A great wave carried the

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unhappy pair far away, and soon they too were engulfed for ever in the black waters.

Symphorian shut his eyes and shuddered with horror as their dying shrieks rang in his ear. A few moments later he was lifted out of the water by strong hands, and laid half dead at the bottom of a boat.

"Happy thou," said a voice, as he came to himself, "thou and two more alone are saved. *Sic transit Gloria Mundi.*"

The poor boy received every attention and kindness on board the *Præcepta Dei*. They told him that he owed his life to having clung to the spar, and to the Prince's sign around his neck. This they had marked, and so made haste to rescue him before the rest, who seemed not to be the Prince's subjects.

When he was quite recovered he was taken before the commander of the Prince's fleet, who had charge of the *Præcepta Dei*. The venerable old man, clad in white from head to foot, received him kindly.

"Son, thou art welcome; happy am I

Symphorian Saved

that we were able to save thee. Now wilt thou sail with us and henceforth serve the Prince?"

"My lord, if I dared ask it, I would beg leave to return to my old companions on the *Pax*. Woe the day that I left them!"

"I know not if they will have thee back again, yet the desire is good. When we come in sight of her I will signal to her and inquire. Meanwhile Theophilus here will be thy companion and teach thee the duties of the Prince's mariners."

Theophilus warmly welcomed his old friend.

"Well, art thou happy on this great ship?" Symphorian asked. "But wherefore didst thou leave the *Pax*?"

"Nay, I know not; I have regretted it ever since. But the work was hard, and I grudged the labour."

"And is it easier here?"

"Well, one has more time to oneself, and is more free. But the work is not greatly to my taste, and it is far more

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dangerous. Instead of working at the oar, we have to climb the rigging and furl the sails, man the yards, and so forth; and this is perilous work. Only a few hours back a lad fell off the yard by my side, and disappeared in the stormy sea. Nor did we ever see him again, and I fear a shark devoured him. Nor are the lads so blithe and friendly as on the *Pax*; we are too large a party to live like brothers as we did on her. Some there are who are unkind, and oftentimes I am very unhappy, and wish I were back again with Agathos and Calixtus and the rest."

"And so indeed do I," replied Symphorian. "Oh, if you knew how miserable I was on board the *Gloria Mundi*! Not indeed at first, for then they flattered me with honeyed words, and all was merry and joyous. But soon they turned from mirth to cruelty, and they mocked me till my life was a burden to me, because I would not throw away the Prince's sign. Hollow indeed and false were the joy and laughter upon that ill-fated ship, and thank-

Return of Symphorian

ful indeed am I to have escaped with life."

"But wilt thou then return with me to the *Pax*, if they will have us?" continued Symphorian eagerly.

Theophilus hung his head.

"Nay, I know not; I fear it is too much for me."

"Well, I do not indeed dare hope that I shall be received again. Yet will I beg the favour on my knees," cried Symphorian, his eyes aglow with earnest determination. He seemed indeed a changed lad since the terrible experience of the shipwreck.

And now the *Pax* was sighted, and a signal flew up to the mast-head of the *Præcepta Dei*, which soon caused her to lay to, until the big ship was alongside of her. Oh, how Symphorian's heart beat as he saw the well-remembered boat with the black sails, and the faces of his dear old comrades on the deck! How serious they looked in their black tunics! Even little Theodore seemed changed. And yet they were the same. There was Callixtus, fair

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and smiling as of old, and there Agathos, tall and sturdy as ever, with the same dear, steadfast face and the innocent grey eyes.

How his heart beat as he leaped into the little boat which soon bore him alongside the *Pax*, and as, after climbing on board, he flung himself at the captain's feet, and begged to be admitted once more among his crew!

"Nay, son," was the reply, and cold and almost stern was the voice. "Freely and of thy own will, and not without warning, didst thou leave us. We do not need thee now."

"Father, try me once more, I pray thee!"

"How can I trust one who has wilfully deserted us to join the company of pleasure-seekers? Remain where thou art; it is better fitted for thee."

"Nay, but try me once again! Indeed, I am not the old Symphorian," he pleaded. "My chosen companions have I seen perish before my eyes, and long before that I had learned by bitter experience

Callixtus Pleads

what the so-called pleasures they had offered me were worth. Fain would I now make atonement. Place me in the lowest rank; only let me stay with thee and thine."

"Father," interrupted a voice low and broken in its pleading; "Father, does not the Blessed One ever receive back into his bark those whose courage has once failed? Ah, surely he is too compassionate to refuse them! See," Callixtus went on, for it was he who pleaded; "I myself am far more unworthy of a place among thy band than poor Symphorian here; yet hast thou pardoned me and placed me in the ranks of thy chosen ones. Pardon, then, our brother here, I pray thee."

The old man's stern face relaxed; a tender smile played for a moment round his mouth as he looked at the boys kneeling at his feet. "Rise, my sons," he said softly, "far be it from me to quench the smoking flax. Symphorian, thy prayer is heard," he added; but though he spoke to that youth, methought his eyes rested rather on Callixtus.

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They rose in all joyousness, but as Symphorian began to pour out his thankfulness, the old man checked him. "Nay, my son, prove thyself rather by deeds than words. To the oar! Take up thy old work again ; and peace be with thee."

The old routine of life on board the *Pax* went on unchanged, but now Symphorian in his white tunic sat ever by the side of Callixtus, and it were hard to say which of the twain worked at the oar more bravely and more ceaselessly. Ever and anon the oarsmen rested and partook of the same mysterious Food, or while others took their turn raised their fresh young voices in the sweet hymns which cheered them in the midst of toil, for they told of the rest and the reward which was in store.

They had still almost half their course to make when they came in sight of a little green island very fair to look upon. The *Pax* ran up her flag to announce her approach, and from the island came in reply the joyous sounds of silver bells. It

The Isle of Sacerdotium

was with renewed vigour that our mariners pulled at their oars, for they had been longing for hours to come to it. For here the Father told them that out of their company were to be chosen some to receive a power and a dignity that was granted but to few. In recompense of their labours they were to be raised to the rank of Vicars of the Prince, His chosen representatives, gifted with His own powers and charged with the care of the other mariners of His fleet. Up till now they had partaken of the mystic Bread, the *Panis Vitæ*, given to them by their captain, but henceforth they, or at least some of them, would be taught how to make this Bread for themselves, and be charged to refresh therewith the fainting and the dying. The sea around the island, whose name was *Sacerdotium*, was calm and blue, and the sun, which had been obscured, now shone out brightly once more. Amid the ringing of the unseen bells the *Pax* glided into the little lagoon, and the voyagers saw with delight the coral rocks and exquisite ver-

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ture of this favoured isle, which had once been the chosen abode of the Prince Himself. After the weary voyage it seemed to them verily a portion of that celestial country whither they were bound; but in truth these beauties were but the surroundings of the wondrous tree, *Lignum Vitæ*, planted on the isle long ago by the hands of the Prince. This great tree raised its stately head in the middle of the island, and its spreading boughs afforded grateful shade to the weary travellers. It was covered with golden fruit and pure white flowers, and its leaves were for the healing of the nations. All who tasted of the liquid distilled thereof were cured of whatever complaint they might be suffering from. But none could distil this liquid save them alone to whom power was given to be Vicars of the Prince. And here, beneath these over-arching boughs, Agathos, Callixtus, and a third named Gaudentius, were chosen to be Vicars of the Prince. Into their trembling hands were placed fruit and leaves plucked by the Father from the Tree of Life.

Vicars of the Prince

Henceforth they were to guard this sacred treasure, which no hand unconsecrated might touch, and offer it to those who were in need. Thus each of them became the very image and likeness of the merciful Prince, who planted this tree to give consolation and strength to weary mariners. And of this fruit was to be made the *Panis Vitæ*, which should give strength to themselves and their companions in the weary task which yet lay before them. I would you could have seen young Agathos and his companions as they knelt before the aged Father their captain, and received from him this gift and this commission in the Prince's name. The calm joy that beamed in their faces was not of earth, and I envied little Theodore when he ran forward to kiss their newly-consecrated hands. A great silence fell on our little company, and methought that in their midst there stood the form of One with pierced hands and feet. His hands were raised in blessing, and in His breast I saw an open wound from which bright flames

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were darting forth. But I know not if the mariners saw this wondrous vision, for they had fallen with their faces to the ground. But there came, as it were, a whisper of air which breathed upon them and thrilled into their hearts. And there followed a soft sound of music so tender and so sweet that it moved them even to tears; and they knew that this, indeed, was holy ground, and that the Prince had not forsaken it.

After a little stay upon the fair Isle of *Sacerdotium* our little company took ship again, Agathos and his fellows now leading the way, each with a golden stole crossed about his breast.

And so the good ship *Pax* ploughed her way through the billows, which soon began to grow more fierce as the island was left behind, and the bay of *Tribulatio* was reached. Still the way was far before they could hope to reach the perilous straits which led to the blessed haven of *Æternitas*. Ever and anon they came upon little boats in deadly peril through the rising

The Superbia Rock

waters, and then would they exhort the mariners to forsake them ere it was too late, and come and cast in their lot with them. And sometimes these poor men took the kindly counsel, and it was passing sweet to see Agathos or Callixtus tending their wounds, or refreshing their hunger with the bread of the strong.

At times their route led them hard by cruel and jagged rocks, that rose out of the unquiet waters, like cruel monsters seeking their destruction. The captain would warn them to redouble their precautions at such times, and although once or twice the keel or sides of the *Pax* actually scraped against one of these dangerous projections, she and her crew escaped all serious damage. Not so some of the other boats. Around one high shining rock that bore, the captain said, the name of *Superbia*, I saw a heap of wreckage, and more than one dead body floating. This rock was doubly dangerous, for parts of it stretched out to a great distance a little under the water, and even some who had avoided it, as they

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thought, struck on these submerged portions and miserably perished. The captain said that it was in fact an extinct volcano, and that it formed the principal height of a long chain of mountains called the *Peccata* range, of which seven peaks were lofty enough to rise above the surface of the waves. The *Pax* passed these peaks at a good distance, her crew continually taking soundings to be sure they were in sufficiently deep water. The rocks called *Ira* and *Invidia*, twin peaks of great height, were jagged and frightful to look upon, but another called *Impudicitia* was, on the contrary, covered with soft and pleasant verdure, and had an attractive appearance. But the captain warned his crew to keep further off from this rock than from any, for that it was the most dangerous of all, since fearful quicksands lay around it, in which thousands had perished, and there was a strong current which drew heedless mariners on to these fatal sands before they were aware of it.

Among these fearful rocks the boys were

Rescue of the Shipwrecked

saddened by the too frequent sight of floating wreckage. Sometimes, however, they were consoled by being able to rescue some shipwrecked mariner, whom they found clinging to a plank or spar. These they usually sent to the *Præcepta Dei*, after Agathos or one of his companions had cured his wounds and restored him to fresh life with their mystic remedies. The blood-red liquid, *Pœnitentia*, distilled, as we said, from the leaves of the *Lignum Vitæ*, never failed to restore such sufferers, even though, when picked up, life had seemed to be extinct. And it was beautiful to see with what zeal and charity the young Vicars of the Prince fulfilled their sacred office. One or two, however, of these poor shipwrecked mariners begged to be allowed to stay in the *Pax*, which had already proved their ark of safety. Two, I remember, were called Gregorius and Marianus. They had embarked through ignorance on a vessel which they had thought to be one of the Prince's fleet. It was, however, a pirate ship plied by one of His bitterest foes, but cunningly

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painted and equipped like one of the Prince's fleet, in order to deceive the unwary. It was not seaworthy, and it had foundered in the bay of *Tribulatio*. Its name, they said, was the *Schisma*. Gregorius and Marianus became very useful members of the *Pax's* crew, and were never tired of expressing their gratitude for their wonderful deliverance.

And still the captain steered his gallant bark, by the aid of the chart drawn long ago by Benedict; and from time to time he told his sons how far they had advanced on their way. The wide and stormy bay of *Tribulatio* once traversed, they would soon come, he told them, to the narrow and dangerous straits of *Mors*, which led directly into the haven of *Æternitas*, of which the waters laved the walls of the Golden City. Then would their labours be at an end, then would their joy be full.

Yet were the straits most perilous to pass, and even if they passed them safely, as they would if they hearkened to his counsel and commands, yet before they

The Star of the Sea

could enter the Golden City, they would each have to undergo a strict examination as to health, for none with the slightest ailment or with the least defect could enter therein. All must be clean, too, from stain or defilement, otherwise they would have to stay without till they were thoroughly cleansed and healed.

And now the sun was already low in the heavens, and on the horizon I saw a single star, rising as it were out of the sea.

"Look," whispered Agathos, "there is the Star of the Sea. Night is coming on, but we shall be safe while we steer our bark by her pale, sweet light. Let us greet her, brothers, with a song."

And over the waters ran the sweetest melody I yet had heard, and methought the words ran somewhat after this fashion:

Ave, Maris Stella,
Dei Mater alma,
Atque semper Virgo,
Felix cœli porta.

I heard Callixtus whisper to Symphorian after the last echoes of the hymn had

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died away: "Before that star has set, our journey will be ended. Courage then, brother, for methinks the worst is o'er."

"Truly, for me, the worst is o'er," was thereply, as Symphorian's hand clasped for a moment the Prince's sign around his neck.

And here my attention was drawn to little Theodore. He was evidently weary, and he had laid down to rest in the bow of the vessel. One of his arms, hanging over the side of the boat, almost touched the waves as they rose and fell. I was wondering whether it were safe to let him sleep in so dangerous a position, when I saw that the watchful eye of the captain had also noticed the child.

Calling Agathos, he bade him rouse his little brother. Agathos went forward to do so, and on coming near, called to him, "Theodore! Theodore!" The child woke with a start, and, seeing his brother, made as if he would rise to run to him. But as he was getting up, I saw him stumble, and the vessel then pitching suddenly forward, he lost his footing and fell overboard.

Theodore in Danger

What a piteous cry the poor child gave:
"Agathos! Agathos!"

Without a moment's hesitation the elder brother, dressed as he was, plunged into the waves after him.

But quickly as this was done, the child was already carried far away, and I saw that his brother's task would be no easy one in that stormy sea. Meanwhile, on board the *Pax* all was activity. By the direction of the captain, the course of the vessel was turned, so as to come as near as possible to the brothers. And then I suddenly heard a shriek, and as I looked I saw the triangular fin of some horrid monster of the deep making straight for the drowning boy. Those on board saw it, too, and fell upon their knees.

There was one exception, however. Almost at the same moment that the cry arose, I heard another plunge, and saw that a second swimmer was hastening to the rescue. It was Callixtus. Oh, how breathlessly I watched the brave boy on his perilous errand! Bravely he breasted

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the raging waters, and each powerful stroke lessened the distance between himself and the child. Agathos, too, was now come near. But would they reach him before the gaping jaws of the monster had closed around him? I hardly dared look. At last I heard a cry of joy from the *Pax*. "Agathos has got him! He is safe now!" And now indeed I saw Agathos, his face deadly pale, clasping with one arm his brother's senseless form, while with the other he struck out for the *Pax*. And Calixtus? I could not see him. Had he sunk in the raging waters? Had he fallen a victim to the monster? My heart beat high with anxiety as I gazed. But no! his head reappeared between the brothers and the dark form of the monster.

"Make haste to the boat," I heard him shout to Agathos. "I will keep off the monster till ye are safe."

Splashing with hands and feet, he boldly swum towards the frightful form, and as the creature opened his vast jaws to devour him, I shuddered, expecting the next

The Prince's Messenger

moment to see the waters reddened with the boy's life-blood. But Callixtus, taking the Prince's sign, which hung around his neck, thrust it boldly into the monster's open jaws, and lo! as by enchantment, the evil creature turned and disappeared. And as the glad songs went up to heaven from the deck of the *Pax*, I saw Agathos and little Theodore kneeling before the captain of the ship.

And a third form knelt beside them. But was this Callixtus? Sunny-haired and bright he had ever been, winning and beautiful to look upon. But now a brightness that was not of earth played round his form, and his eyes were fixed upward with an expression so heavenly, so ecstatic, that all gazed at him in awe.

And then I saw standing before him on the deck a form I had never seen erstwhile. It was a young man fair and beautiful, clad in a long garment woven, as it seemed, of gold and crystal. Upon his brow burned a clear bright star, and his bare feet seemed aflame. In his hand he bore a branch of

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palm, with golden fruit, and great white wings o'ershadowed his princely head. As the boys caught sight of him, they were filled with awe, and fell upon their knees.

"Rise, children," said the captain's voice, "for this is a messenger from the Prince. Perchance he hath come to announce to you the Prince's will."

But the Prince's messenger, gazing upon Callixtus, said in a voice sweet and clear as a silver flute, "Child, thy task is done, and the Prince hath sent for thee." And then before the others scarce knew what words had fallen from his lips, he bent down swiftly and kissed the kneeling boy gently on the brow, and placed in his hand the palm-branch with the golden fruit. And then gathering him in his arms, as a mother takes her tired babe, he spread his mighty pinions white as the driven snow, and flashed across the sea, as passes the summer lightning, and was gone. Gone so swiftly that their eyes could not follow him; gone, but not alone. For Callixtus was gone too, and gone without a word. The

The Death of Callixtus

little Theodore burst into passionate weeping, and the others could not forbear from tears.

“Hush, my children, and hearken,” said the Father’s voice. Far away, beyond the eastern horizon, below the Star of the Sea, they could still see a light flashing in distant splendour, while on their ears came echoes of melody, like the sound of many waters, and the song, methought, shaped itself into words, and ran:

*Majorem caritatem nemo habet
Ut animam suam ponat quis pro amicis suis.
Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est.*

“Yes, children,” continued the old man, and his voice seemed broken though his eyes were dry, “ye have lost your brother, but not indeed for long. He has but gone before you, and soon shall ye meet him again. Weep not, for he is happy, and this great reward hath the Prince given him, because he feared not to lay down his life to save his friend.”

“Oh, happy Callixtus!” said Agathos.

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"Father, think you he will remember us sometimes?"

"Nay, doubt it not. He hath entered before you into the presence chamber, and now he standeth with the Blessed One before the Prince's throne. But he is the same Callixtus as of old, the Callixtus who pleaded for Symphorian, and be sure that he will be pleading with the Prince for you."

"Oh, Father, Father, it was all my fault," wailed little Theodore. "We have lost him through me."

"Thou wast off thy guard, and so didst fall into great peril," said the captain gravely; "and having fallen from the ship, danger indeed there was lest thou shouldst have become a victim of the evil monster, Heresy, which ever haunts these seas, seeking whom it may devour. But thy error was rather one of weakness than of malice. Weep not then, my child, for the Prince hath pardoned thee"; and as he said these words the old man's hand rested lightly for a moment on the child's bowed head.

"And were not Callixtus and I in dan-

“Happy Callixtus!”

ger from the monster?” asked Agathos, timidly.

“Nay, for ye braved its malice to save the child, and this cruel monster is cowardly and ever fleeth before the Prince’s sign. Ye know that the Prince hath said: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, and called thee by thy name, thou art Mine; when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and the deep shall overwhelm thee not.’ But our good Prince, seeing that Callixtus had such love, and that charity made to him wax exceeding bold, saw that he was already worthy to stand before His face.”

“And so He sent for him,” added Agathos softly. “Happy Callixtus!”

“And thou, my Agathos, art worthy too,” whispered little Theodore, as he flung his arms round his brother’s neck, “but the good Prince knew that I should be lost indeed without thy care. Oh, Agathos, Agathos, keep me safe until we see the Prince, and dear Callixtus at His side.”

And then I saw that Symphorian, who

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now wore the sable tunic of the *Pax*'s crew, was weeping bitterly apart from the rest, as one who would not be comforted. But Agathos and Theodore went to the poor boy, and told him they would do their best to take the place of his lost friend, and that Callixtus would not like him to grieve.

And little Theodore prattled to him of the happy days in store when they would sit around the Prince's feet in the Golden City, and how Callixtus would be there, never more to be parted from them; and after a time he was comforted.

And so the good ship *Pax* ploughed her way in the deepening twilight through the raging billows, and still the star in the east shone brightly, and the songs went up unceasingly to heaven. It were a long story to relate all that befell her on her way. Let it suffice to see her enter the haven whither she was bound.

The darkness had by this time grown complete, only the light of the *Maris Stella* shone steadily overhead. The aged captain broke at last the silence which had fallen

Nearing Port

on the ship. "Sons," he exclaimed, "we have now but to double the point and thread the straits which separate us from our haven of rest. But this is the most perilous part of our voyage. Watch and be alert; follow my instructions, and all will be well." A cold, icy blast swept sudden on them from the point; the waves rose higher and higher under its furious assault; the blackness of the night was now intense. And now the heights on either side seemed to close in on them and hem them in. I could but see the faces of the young crew by the light of the lantern which hung at the masthead.

They were pale, but full of hope and courage. Agathos was labouring like a hero at the oar, and Symphorian was not far behind in zeal. The boat rolled and pitched so that it was exceedingly difficult to keep a straight course, while to strike against the black pitiless rocks on either side would have meant instant destruction. The steersman's eyes were fixed upon the Star, and ever and anon the mariners raised their

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voices in the hymn, *Ave Maris Stella*. Agathos kept repeating to himself some lines of this hymn, which seemed to run thus :

Vitam præsta puram,
Iter para tutum;
Ut videntes JESUM
Semper collætémur.

Theodore gave, once, a startled cry as a wave flung itself over the bulwarks, and its black waters laved his feet. But a look at Agathos' calm, steadfast face speedily restored his courage.

Suddenly, with a wild shriek, the gale burst on them with redoubled fury, extinguishing the lantern at the helm. The blackness closed around so that I could see no more. Only one voice pierced the awful darkness; it was the voice of the aged captain : *Subvenite Sancti Dei, occurrere Angeli Domini*, it cried. I fell upon my knees and prayed. It seemed to me that the darkness was full of winged beings, evil and horrible, and that their wild cries of rage and hatred mingled with the shriek-

The Golden City

ing of the gale. There was an awful malignity, a despairing hatred, about these unseen beings that chilled my blood. Was it possible that the ship could weather so many dangers? I could not even see the Star.

Suddenly there was a lull in the crash and fury of the elements, one last wild shriek, and then a calm. The darkness lifted like a curtain; and I saw.

The *Pax* had passed the awful straits in safety, and was now in calm water. The lads had shipped their oars, and were kneeling round their captain on the deck. They were all there, and unhurt. A gentle breeze filled out the sails of the vessel and bore them swiftly towards the land. I gazed towards the shore. A light, brighter far and yet softer than the sun, lit up the sky with a pearly radiance, and fell upon the water in beams that traced a path of liquid gold for the vessel of the Blessed One. The light seemed to stream forth from amidst purple mountains which rose tall and stately from the water's edge. But I knew it was the

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light of the Golden City, whose beauty eye of man hath not seen, nor can it enter into his heart to conceive. Swiftly and silently the *Pax* sped on her way along the path of light. Kneeling with clasped hands and upturned faces, the young mariners gazed towards the shore.

"Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty, and behold the land which is very far off," whispered Agathos, as he pressed his brother's hand.

And now the light grew ever brighter and more dazzling, and it seemed to me that there, mingled in its beams, I could trace forms of dazzling brightness, as though a procession of the blessed was streaming out along that golden path to welcome the mariners home.

It seemed to me that this procession was headed by the form of a venerable man with long, flowing beard and hair white as driven snow, all radiant with a glory such as mine eyes had ne'er beheld nor my heart dreamed of. And at his side I saw a fair-haired boy whom I knew at once again. It

Callixtus Again

was Callixtus, the same Callixtus as of old, but transfigured and radiant like the sun. And in that blessed company were young and old, men and maidens, of all ages and all climes, and they were clad in garments like unto those worn by the young mariners of the *Pax*, only that these were not of sable hue, but white and glistening as if woven of pure light. Was it the Blessed One himself, with the company of his chosen come forth to welcome home the weary mariners?

I know not, for as I gazed the light grew ever brighter and more intense, until I was fain to veil my eyes. But upon my ears there smote a melody, surpassing in sweetness any song of earth, and I deemed that it was hymned forth by choirs antiphonal. Methought the first strain was raised by Agathos and his comrades, and that the alternate strain was taken up by that bright company who had come forth to welcome them. And thus the song:

Lætatus sum in his quæ dicta sunt
mihi : in domum DOMINI ibimus.

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and the response:

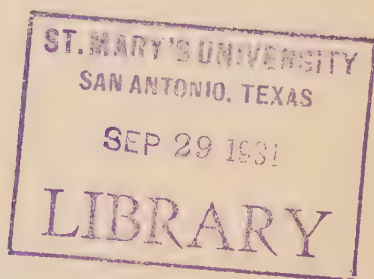
Stantes erant pedes nostri in atriis
tuis, Jerusalem.

And thus the alternate strain rose and
fell in waves of melody surpassing sweet,
across the pearly sea, until it died away
upon my ravished ears—and I awoke.

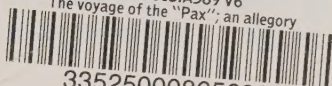
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